



Your Palm Reference Library, Part 2

Feature By Benjamin E. Sones

It may be a week behind schedule (thanks to Denny Atkin's Visor Prism and Platinum feature last week), but we've finally gotten around to bringing you the second part of our Palm reference feature. For some strange reason, thesauruses for the Palm OS seem to be more abundant than dictionaries; here are four of the best.

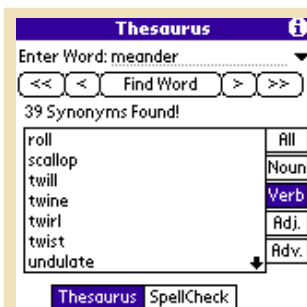
ArsLexis (www.arslexis.com), makers of the excellent Noah Pro and Noah Lite dictionaries, also offer the ArsLexis Thesaurus 1.0. It's based on Roget's Thesaurus and comes with two different databases—a 194 K basic database (for the memory conservationist), and a 370 K deluxe database (for users with a “bring it on!” philosophy). The interface is simple and features a few nice convenience features, such as word completion and a history list that remembers the last five words that you have looked up. Even the smaller database is fairly comprehensive—for \$10, you can't go wrong. ArsLexis Thesaurus is definitely on the top of the heap in terms of value for your dollar.

DDH Software (www.ddhsoftware.com), makers of HandBase, offers a dual-purpose reference application called Thesaurus 1.11. It's based on Roget's, just like the ArsLexis Thesaurus, and it's single database weighs in at 280 K. You can filter your results to see just the nouns, verbs, adverbs, or adjectives—a handy feature when a search returns a long list of matches. Thesaurus also comes with a spellcheck mode—you

enter a word, and the application will tell you whether or not you have spelled it correctly (or at least whether or not it has that word in its database). If not, it will offer a list of suggestions for proper spellings. It's a nice idea, but it doesn't work nearly as well as the thesaurus. Common Palm spelling mistakes such as missed letters tend to trip it up (“grss” returned granitic and gratitude but not grass, for instance, even though that word is in the database). Thesaurus is only \$15, however, so it's still a decent value even if you never use the spellchecker.

Next up the ladder (in terms of price) is WordSleuth Thesaurus by LandWare (www.landware.com). The database footprint is fairly small (200 K) and features about 210,000 synonyms, according to LandWare. Its features are comparable to DDH Software's Thesaurus, but it uses a custom database that is not based on Roget's. It's a good application, but it doesn't really offer anything to justify the slightly higher price tag.

Alphasoft's (www.trueterm.com) TrueTerm Thesaurus is the only application that allows you to add to the database, so if you are looking for customizability it is probably your only option. You will likely need to add to the database, too, since the one that comes with the application is only 130 K in size. It also offers multilingual support, but the \$30 price tag makes the alternatives seem a lot more enticing.



DDH Software's Thesaurus also features a spellchecking mode... but you probably will not use it.

Review Visor Prism \$449, Handspring, www.handspring.com

Now that we have our very own Visor Prism in hand, we're happy to report it's as impressive as our preview look indicated.

Those who encountered Handspring's ordering glitches last year will be happy to know that our unit ordered “express” the previous Sunday arrived on Wednesday. We promptly loaded it up with our favorite applications and games and put it to the real test—daily use. The speedy 33MHz processor doesn't just benefit games—scrolling in apps like AvantGo is noticeably more responsive. We tried a number of Springboards in the Prism and had only one problem—MiniJam's MiniJukebox application locked up the Prism. InnoGear is working on a fix. The

Stowaway keyboard also worked perfectly.

The screen is very sharp and readable. Our only software that took advantage of 16-bit color was a pre-release picture viewer, but Astraware is slated to release its 16-bit Zap!2016 game today. The inclusion of Palm OS 3.5.2H means the Prism runs all the latest apps and now supports Infrared HotSync. We only wish the OS was in upgradeable Flash memory.

Overall, the Prism is the most impressive Palm OS device yet. The only caveat is its \$449 price, especially since Palm's reaction to the Prism was to cut the price of its (admittedly less advanced) color Palm IIc to \$329. —Denny Atkin

News

Visor Video

If you are looking for a hot application geared towards showing off the 16-bit bells and whistles in your new Visor Prism, check out ActiveSky's new media player (www.activesky.com). The company has penned an agreement with Handspring to provide digital media for the new Prism and Platinum Visors. Now all you need is more memory...

Get Cross?

Long time pen maker Cross is gearing up for the digital age with a new line of pens aimed at handheld users. The new Morph DigitalWriter Duo has a regular ballpoint pen on one end, and a stylus tip on the other. Cross also offers a special inkless refill that allows you to transform any Cross pen into a stylus. For more information, visit www.cross.com.

Microsoft Crosses the Lines

InfoWorld (www.infoworld.com) is reporting that Microsoft may be crossing the battle lines and porting some of their applications (such as Word and Exchange) to the Palm OS. CEO Steve Ballmer explains that he has no intention of abandoning the company's own PocketPC, and adds that embracing the rival OS' estimated 7 million users is a “logical business strategy.”

New Software

HBExpense 1.0

Track all your business expenses on the go, then export them to Excel for easy printing. You can start by recording the purchase of this application—it sells for \$19.95. www.handsbreadth.com

HandBBall 1.0

Track basketball game information such as shots made, missed, fouls, and rebounds for your favorite players. It's a standalone application, and it's free. members.tripod.com/~OurFamilyOf5/PalmSW/

D&D Character Sheet 3E 1.0b

Finally, a digital character sheet for the D&D 3rd Edition. Registered users get three bonus applications—Spellbook, SkillPack and Monster Catalog—all for \$10. www.liquidpalm.com

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